THE DUELIST COMPANION

December 1995 The Official Newsletter of the Duelists' Convocation™ Issue 16

Our New Year's Resolutions

Greetings, Gentle Members!

The Duelists' Convocation is excitedly awaiting 1996! As we usher in the new year, you'll see a brand-new organization, one that we believe will offer significant improvements in the value of your memberships.

1. One of the most frequent concerns we hear from you is that you experience difficulty in obtaining an established rating. Our current member rating system permits alterations in members' ratings only when Duelists' Convocation members compete against other members during sanctioned tournaments. You've described to us how it's very possible to compete in several sanctioned tournaments and play only a few matches against your fellow Duelists' Convocation members. So, beginning January 1, 1996, the Duelists' Convocation will institute an important change to our rating system: We will adjust your ratings for EACH match you play at a sanctioned tournament! That's right—ALL your matches will count toward your rating, even if you compete against non-members, *provided the match takes place at a sanctioned tournament!* We anticipate that this will enable you to earn an established rating far more quickly.

Unfortunately, this change means a little more work for our wonderful tournament organizers; they will have to report the results of each match in which a member plays to the Duelists' Convocation. We apologize for this unavoidable side effect, but we hope that tournament coordinators will work with us to make the new system effective. For further information about how this affects a tournament coordinator's responsibilities, please see Tres Henry's article elsewhere in this issue.

Hey! Where do you think you're going? A tournament? *Now?* Wait a minute—we're not finished yet! There's more...

2. We at the Duelists' Convocation realize that our members deserve the very best benefits and support we can provide, so we have planned a series of improvements designed to increase the value of your membership. We'll begin by enhancing all of our membership materials: both the membership certificate and the membership card will sport our sharp new logo and will feature an all-new design (it looks great!). Current members will receive these hot new items as they renew their memberships. Tournament coordinators aren't left out in the cold—our official Sanctioning Certificate will also bear our new logo and a new design.

Next, we'll turn our attention to *The Duelist Companion.* Our official newsletter will continue to include the many benefits readers have come to expect: advance promotional cards (when available), advance card lists, tournament rules updates, and Mark Rosewater's fiendishly fantastic puzzles. We'd also like to improve *The Companion* in 1996 by featuring more serious, hard-core tournament coverage, more pages, members' letters, and a color format.

DUELISTS' CONVOCATION INTERNATIONAL

We've also planned several very special surprises—no, I can't tell you what they are! If I told you, they'd cease to be surprises, wouldn't they? And *then* where would you be?

3. We have been working with other Wizards of the Coast teams to create a members-only merchandise catalog. Items featured in the catalog will be available to Duelists' Convocation members ONLY—these items will not be available through retail or wholesale outlets anywhere else in the world! We think the items we've selected will be of special interest to tournament enthusiasts. Naturally, these items will feature our cool new logo so that everyone who sees them will know that YOU are a proud member of the Duelists' Convocation!

4. Many members have mentioned that they appreciated receiving official Duelists' Convocation sanctioned tournament rules booklets. Members will continue to receive tournament rules and updates as they are released. As you are the players most concerned with the official tournament rules, we believe it's only right that you have access to these documents before they are made available to the general public.

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5. We do have one piece of unfortunate news. Due to rising production, printing, and shipping costs, *The Duelist* magazine will no longer be able to offer free subscriptions to new Duelists' Convocation members. While we regret this necessity, we are indebted to Wendy Noritake, the business director of *The Duelist*, for providing us with a special, members-only reduced subscription rate for new and renewing members. The magazine's cover price will increase to $4.95 per issue in 1996, or $29.70 for a full year. Duelists' Convocation members will be able to subscribe for $14.95 for a full year, saving $14.75 off the cover price. Existing members shouldn't worry—you will continue to receive your full subscription until it's time for you to renew your membership. Likewise, new members who join on or before December 31, 1995, will receive their full subscription as well. We'd like to say "Thank you, Wendy!" and wish *The Duelist* the very best!

So what do you think of our resolutions? We want to encourage and invite all our members to participate in tournaments this coming year. Why? Because tournaments provide you with many valuable opportunities! You can test your playing skills, establish a Duelists' Convocation rating, interact with fellow enthusiasts, and make new friends! No sanctioned tournaments in your area? Why not send for a pre-sanctioning packet and become a tournament coordinator—become the envy of your friends and the idol of millions (well, dozens, anyway)! Got an idea for a new tournament format? We'd love to read it! Want to share a funny or interesting tournament experience with your fellow members? Send it to us! Help us make 1996 the best year yet to be a member of the Duelists' Convocation!

Happy Holidays,

Jason Carl
Director, Duelists' Convocation

SIDEBOARDS HELP MAKE TOURNAMENT WINNERS

by Ed Willis (member #1023)

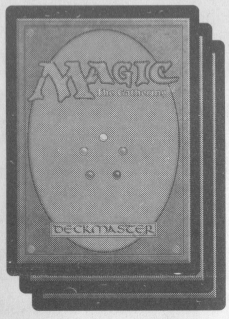
There you are in your first tournament match with a great deck concept which wins its first game easily. After losing that first game, your opponent goes to his sideboard. The next two games are close, but you lose both and are knocked out of the tournament in the very first round! I don't know how many matches I've played in which my opponent had a good deck concept, only to have me beat him in the last two games because of my sideboard.

The fifteen-card sideboard is equivalent to 25 percent of a 60-card deck—one quarter of the cards. Think about it: you could exchange out 75 percent of one full color in an evenly split two-color 60 card deck to your sideboard. In a 60-card deck with 40 usable spell cards, that's 37.5 percent of the play cards. Nearly 40 percent of your usable deck can be changed out during a match—that's real power, when used properly. With that in mind, there are three general ways a sideboard can be constructed.

The first is the theme change sideboard. For example, put fifteen direct damage cards in your sideboard; your play deck, however, should contain fifteen creatures. Between games, you can go in and exchange out the fifteen creatures for the fifteen direct damage cards, thereby changing your deck's theme from a creature deck to a direct damage deck. While this can be fun, it usually won't serve you well in a tournament setting.

The second type of sideboard—and probably the most common—is the specific effect sideboard. A specific effect sideboard is one designed with cards that affect specific colors or cards: for example, Gloom, Shatter, Tsunami, or any of the numerous cards that only affect one type or color of card. Sideboards made to combat specific colors or card types *do* work, provided your opponent is playing a color or card type that you took into consideration when constructing your sideboard.

The third and most powerful type of sideboard is the global effect sideboard. A global sideboard is a sideboard that effects the entire environment of the game—i.e., all players, including you. The advantage you gain from this is that you have already accounted for these changes in your deck and sideboard so that when you put your sideboard cards into play, they hinder your opponent and not you. Winter Orb, Howling Mine, and In the Eye of Chaos—all of these cards affect whole groups of cards instead of just a few cards. All of these cards have a specific purpose, but unlike other one-shot specific effect cards, each of these has a far-reaching global effect that lasts until the game ends or the card is sent to the graveyard. Being able to put a Winter Orb into play against a deck that requires the use of large amounts of mana can be truly devastating. Or how about putting an Energy Flux and Winter Orb in play against someone using nothing but artifacts? Talk about locking up a game! With all that a sideboard can do, it's still, for the most part, an afterthought in deck construction for many players.



When constructing a sideboard, there are seven simple steps that will make the sideboard a valuable tool in tournament matches.

1. Determine the vulnerabilities of your deck—every deck has weaknesses. You must be able to recognize these weaknesses if you are going to overcome them. Is your deck vulnerable to direct damage or creatures? Is your deck slow to develop or is it so fast that your hand is empty after three turns? These observations will be important to your sideboard construction later.

2. Choose cards for your sideboard that either reduce your vulnerabilities or increase your opponent's vulnerabilities. Look for cards that affect large groups of cards, such as In the Eye of Chaos, Winter Orb, or The Abyss. As long as you've taken these cards under consideration when designing your deck, you should be able to work around them while your opponent is drastically hindered by them.

3. Use three or four of any one card you put in the sideboard. Many people put one or two of any one card in the sideboard, and this is a major mistake. Remember why the restricted cards are limited to only one card—because the odds of drawing a restricted card are only 1 in 60. Even two cards only reduces the odds to 1 in 30 of drawing the card you need. Why would you want to create restricted cards in your sideboard? The whole reason cards are restricted is to reduce the effectiveness of the more powerful and game-breaking/spoiling cards. Don't do the same thing to cards in your sideboard!

4. Don't be afraid to hurt your own deck. When asked to give up ten dollars today toward a return of one hundred dollars next week, what would you do? The same idea applies to choosing cards for your sideboard. If I need to mana-lock myself to ensure that my opponent can't destroy my creatures—and thereby guaranteeing myself victory—you can bet I will do it. Therefore, don't be afraid to put cards in your sideboard that will hurt you, if their presence will ultimately provide you with an advantage that could win the game for you.

5. Don't wait until the last minute to build a sideboard—I'm even guilty of this one. The sideboard should fit seamlessly into your deck and should therefore be built *with* your deck. Many times the sideboard is an afterthought and is thrown together in the hour before a tournament. Because of this, the cards may not perform well with the deck concept you have devised. So plan and construct your sideboard while constructing your deck.

6. The cards that will be swapped in and out of your deck and sideboard should be predetermined. This may be contrary to many opinions, but think about it: if you know ahead of time which decks will give your deck the most trouble, then you should be able to determine what won't help you in your original deck and what will help you from the sideboard. Knowing this, you should be able to exchange between deck and sideboard exactly what you need to give you the advantage. Removing cards on the fly can cause you to pull cards from your deck that are actually helping you to leave cards in your deck that are useless against your opponent's deck.

7. Always test your deck with the sideboard. No football player would practice without a helmet; why would you test your deck without its sideboard? In order to truly see the interaction of your sideboard with your deck, you need to play with both, adjusting them according to how they perform in real game situations.

While no one can guarantee that they'll win every time, by using these steps when building a sideboard, you'll be better prepared to handle many more situations than you might be with a conventional sideboard, thrown together haphazardly at the last minute. Personally, I've had many opportunities to talk with and play against some of the best players around the country. And if there is one thing we all agree on, it's that sideboards do make a difference to tournament winners!

Magic: The Puzzling

by Mark Rosewater

"MAN O' MANA"

Your opponent is Skaff, and you are in the third game of the match. Unfortunately, Skaff is ahead with one and a half wins (you tied the second game). All he needs to do is tie or win this duel and he will have his two games to advance to the next round. Using his Glasses of Urza to check out your hand, Skaff concocted an evil plan: he stored up large amounts of mana using his mana batteries and storage lands and then, knowing you only had a Mana Drain to protect yourself, hit you last turn with a 109-point Fireball. It is now the beginning of your main phase. One hundred and ten colorless mana have just been dumped into your mana pool. All that matters now is that you find a way to defeat Skaff without dying yourself. Happy Casting!!

THE FINE PRINT

Tawnos's Coffin {4}
{3} Select a creature in play; that creature is considered out of play as long as Coffin remains tapped. Hence the creature cannot be the target of spells and connot receive damage, use special powers, attack, or defend. All counters and enchantments on the creature remain but are also out of play. If Coffin is untapped or removed, creature returns to play tapped. You may choose not to untap Coffin during the untap phase.

Tropical Island
{T}: Add either {G} or {U} to your mana pool. Counts as both forest and islands and is affected by spells that affect either. If a spell destroys one of these land types, this card is destroyed; if a spell alters one of these land types, the other land type is unaffected.

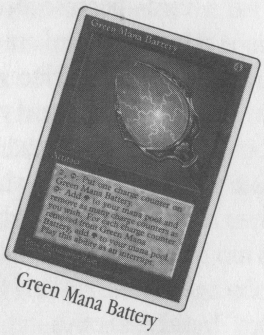
Tundra
{T}: Add either {U} or {W} to your mana pool. Counts as both islands and plains and is affected by spells that affect either. If a spell destroys one of these land types, this card is destroyed; if a spell alters one of these land types, the other land type is unaffected.

Underground Sea
{T}: Add either {B} or {U} to your mana pool. Counts as both swamp and islands and is affected by spells that affect either. If a spell destroys one of these land types, this card is destroyed; if a spell alters one of these land types, the other land type is unaffected.

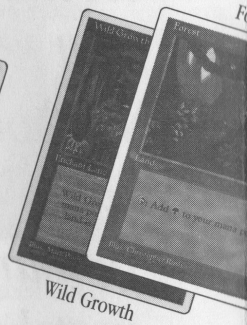
Wild Growth {G}
Wild Growth adds {G} to your mana pool each time target land is tapped for mana.

MANA POOL
110 colorless mana

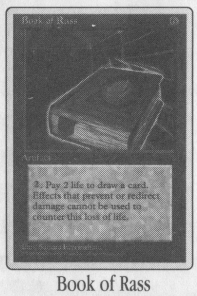
Skaff (Green/Red)


Green Mana Battery

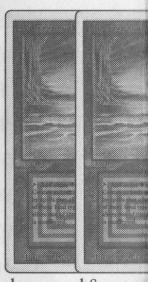
Red Mana Battery

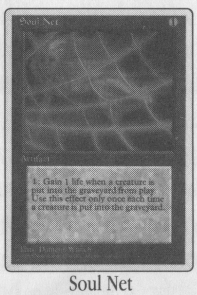

Wild Growth

You (Black/Blue/Green)


Book of Rass

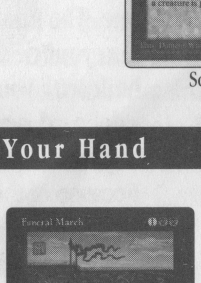
Swamp Swamp

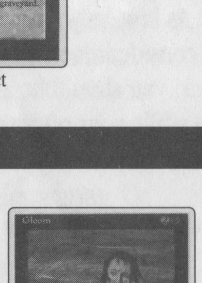

Underground Sea

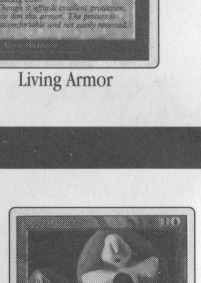

Soul Net

Living Armor

Your Hand


Funeral March

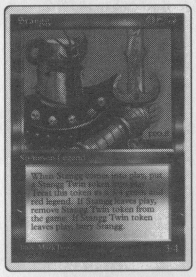

Gloom


Copy Artifact

MAGIC: THE PUZZLING

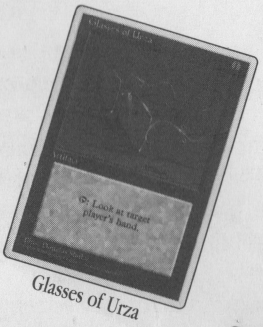
29 Life Points Remaining

Stangg's Twin



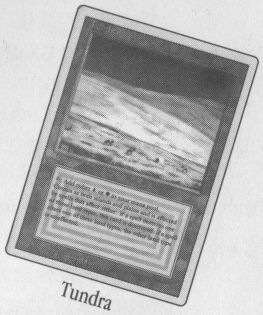
Stangg

Ernham Djinn

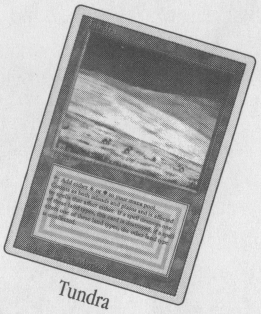


Glasses of Urza

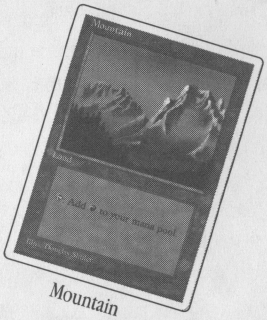
Hollow Trees



Tundra



Tundra

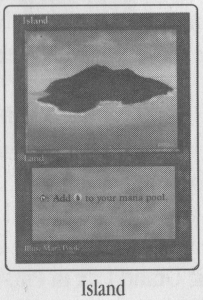


Mountain

Dwarven Hold

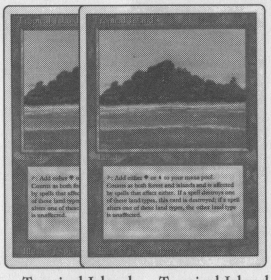
2 Life Points Remaining

Underground Sea

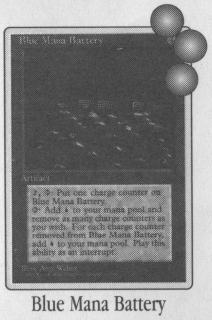


Island

Forest

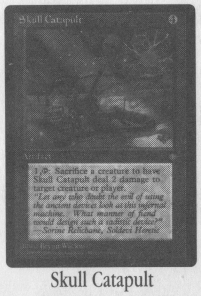


Tropical Island Tropical Island



Blue Mana Battery with 3 counters

Tawnos's Coffin

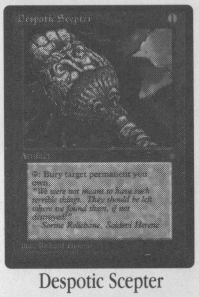


Skull Catapult

Scavenger Folk

Onulet

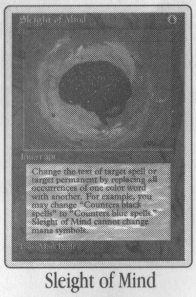
Cyclopean Mummy



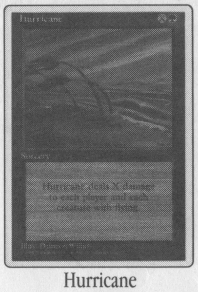
Despotic Scepter

(You have no cards in your Graveyard)

Reconstruction



Sleight of Mind



Hurricane

Cards Remaining In Your Library

Feldon's Cane

Transmutation

Animate Artifact

THESE DAYS, $25.00 GOES A LONG WAY...

Upon returning after my long journey home from Dominia via New York City last week, I flipped on my office computer only to find my electronic mailbox stuffed like my Uncle Ralph at a Superbowl party.

Mail from across the country and beyond zooms in and out of bordered boxes: someone in New Jersey wants islands banned from tournament play; someone from Maine wants to buy a DCNA membership for his dog, claiming it's the best **Magic** player in the neighborhood; an event coordinator would like to politely request 40 cases of *Ice Age* starters shipped to his house... overnight; anonymous threats here and there over the banning of Chaos Orb dot the screen; a few random rules requests; and then...

"Duelists' Convocation breaks own rules." What was this?! *How could this have happened,* I think to myself. Frantically, I double-click and scour the post.

Quoting tournament rules and Duelists' Convocation International policies, the post's author slams the recent *Homelands* Sealed-Deck tournament in NYC. Lambasting my team for charging outrageous fees, the author cries favoritism to our host, Wizards of the Coast.

As Sanctioning Goddess and the responsible party for granting sanctioning status to the event coordinators, I was distressed.

So, I will use this space to explain the cost of the event (which was a blast):

Total cost to player:	**$25.00**
Tournament fees:	
Fourth Edition starter:	**$8.95** (manufacturer's suggested retail price)
Three (3) *Homelands* boosters:	**$5.25** (3 x $1.75) (manufacturer's suggested retail price)
entrance fee:	**$5.00**
New York state sales tax:	**$1.70** (12 percent)
TOTAL:	**$20.90**

The remaining $4.10 went to:

- Entry into the world of Domina which included a walk through the five lands of Dominia (a sort of spooky **Magic** funhouse)
- The opportunity to play **Magic** against Richard Garfield and half a dozen WotC celebrities
- An optical adventure into Homelands with the virtual-io glasses (really cool 3-D stuff)
- The opportunity to play ANY WotC product, including access to a GIANT **RoboRally** game board
- The opportunity to cruise through our retail booth
- A free goody bag that was chock-full of cool stuff, **including an additional *Homelands* booster**
- An introduction to **Magic** from Microprose and Acclaim Comics

The Duelists' Convocation wasn't breaking our own rules *or* showing favoritism to Wizards of the Coast. We were trying to show some appreciation for our members, and I believe we did just that.

All the contestants in the tournament were friendly, polite, courteous, and grateful. It was incredible to see so many players excited about the game and the new expansion; in all my time running events, I have never met such great players.

Thanks for a terrific time, folks.

Heather Henricks
Sanctioning Goddess
Duelists' Convocation North America

NEW TOURNAMENT REPORT FORM IMPROVES RATING PROCESS

The Sanctioning Department is currently in the process of changing the sanctioned tournament report procedure.

Event Coordinators who have run sanctioned tournaments before are aware of the procedure for preparing tournament reports. Until now, the Sanctioning Department only required tournament reports to record matches that paired DCNA members against DCNA members. Well, hold on to those neurons because we're going to make a few more changes to better serve our loyal members.

After carefully considering several options, the Sanctioning Department has decided to adopt a new system that will allow *all* matches in sanctioned tournaments to effect DCNA member ratings. On the new tournament report, Event Coordinators must include the names and addresses of any non-DCNA members who play in a sanctioned event. With this format, DCNA members will have a rating that more accurately reflects their ability.

As the Sanctioning Assistant, my frustration stemmed from calls such as, "Hi there—my name is Billy-Bob from Durtburg, USA, and I want to know my ratings....What? I don't even have a provisional rating? But I won the silver gong at the Magic Grand Prix in Pittsville!" By February, I will be able to answer these concerns with an accurate rating.

A question may remain in the minds of DCNA members such as, "Does this mean that non-members will be able to play in sanctioned tournaments and receive a DCNA rating?" Not at this time. Non-member matches will be recorded for the sole purpose of calculating an accurate rating for DCNA members.

The Sanctioning Department at the Duelists' Convocation North America is constantly improving our system to better suit the needs of DCNA members. One important way to recognize members' concerns is receiving feedback from letters and phone calls.

So keep the mail flowing and the phone lines buzzing!

Tres Henry
Sanctioning Assistant

MYSTERIES OF THE MEMBERS' MAGAZINES

Several Duelists' Convocation members have notified us that *Duelist* #7 has arrived late or not at all (sigh). We at the Convocation don't like this any more than you do, and we are trying to work out some way that we can consistently get you your copies of *The Duelist* magazine before it hits the newsstands.

Our initial plan was that the *Duelist*'s fulfillment house (every magazine has one) would mail copies of the magazine to members and subscribers one week before retail stores received their copies. Unfortunately, the fulfillment house was unable to meet our requirements and some members still had delivery problems.

The Duelist then changed its fulfillment house, hoping for better results, and we thought the problem would be solved. But members informed us that this wasn't the case—*The Duelist* still arrived late (or not at all). So our staff met with *The Duelist* staff and changed our shipping postal class from 3rd to 2nd class. Now we were certain that the magazines would arrive early! Well, lately we've received letters and phone calls informing us that some members are still experiencing problems with the latest issue. You can imagine how frustrated and confused we are!

In some cases, your local post office may also be contributing to delayed and missing issues. Post offices can legally hold non-First Class mail for as long as five days at any office. Members who move may also experience delays in receiving *The Duelist,* as it takes time for the post office to process forwarded mail. Those members who consistently receive their issues late, or who fail to receive more than one issue, should first confirm their mailing address with the Duelists' Convocation. If we have the correct mailing information, your next stop should be your local post office—you might find that some of your delivery problems can be solved by talking to your local postmaster.

We'd like to apologize once again for the delays in some deliveries. As noted above, we are doing everything possible to remedy this situation! You can help by confirming that we have your current mailing address (just check the address on the outside of the envelope this issue of *Companion* arrived in) and by informing us promptly when you move. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Rikki Beatty
Membership, Duelists' Convocation

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DUELISTS' CONVOCATION
INTERNATIONAL

CREDITS

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Mark Ellis Walker—Magic Fingers Layout

Contributors
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SANCTIONED EVENTS
DECEMBER 1995

Department of Public Health Tournament — **TYPE I and II**
South Boston Boys-N-Girls Club
Hudson, MA
December 2
Doug Wolfe, Coordinator
(508) 562-7898

The Saturday Gathering — **TYPE I and II**
Costa Mesa Women's Club
Costa Mesa, CA
December 2
Scott M. Larabee, Coordinator
(714) 444-4566

Christmas at Ground Zero II — **TYPE I, II, and SEALED DECK**
Bask Riprock's
Lubbock, TX
December 2-3
Matthew Blackmon, Coordinator
(806) 763-4054

Caffeine & Conquest — **SEALED DECK**
Tri-Espresso Cafe
Honolulu, HI
December 3
Michael Eaton, Coordinator
(808) 596-7531

Ice Magic Tournament — **TYPE I and II**
University Center East
Rolla, MO
December 9
Tom Bumgardner, Coordinator
(314) 368-4791

Novo Con XI — **TYPE I**
Gardner Student Center, U of A
Akron, OH
December 9
Brian N. Podlogar, Coordinator
(216) 972-7345

The Saturday Gathering — **TYPE I and II**
Costa Mesa Women's Club
Costa Mesa, CA
December 9
Scott M. Larabee, Coordinator
(714) 444-4566

Magic Tournament — **TYPE I**
Carmel Youth Center
Carmel, CA
December 10
MacKenzie Patterson, Coordinator
(408) 624-5377

Magic the Gathering Tournament & Show — **TYPE I**
Inn at Reading
Wyomissing, PA
December 10
Richard Waldbiesser, Coordinator
(610) 374-7749

The December Gathering — **TYPE I and SEALED DECK**
Silverdale Community Center
Silverdale, WA
December 10
Pete Steinmetz, Coordinator
(360) 697-7238

Magicide IV — **TYPE I, II, and SEALED DECK**
Oddfellows Hall
Hudson, MA
December 16
Doug Wolfe, Coordinator
(508) 562-7898

Wizards OF THE COAST

Brunswick Valley Bowl — **SEALED DECK**
Simi Valley, CA
December 16-17
Jamey S. Parker, Coordinator
(805) 579-0312

The Saturday Gathering — **TYPE I and II**
Costa Mesa Women's Club
Costa Mesa, CA
December 16
Scott M. Larabee, Coordinator
(714) 444-4566

Magic Sealed Deck Tournament — **SEALED DECK**
City of Olympia Community Center
Olympia, WA
December 18
Kathleen Burns, Coordinator
(360) 753-8380

The Saturday Gathering — **TYPE I and II**
Costa Mesa Women's Club
Costa Mesa, CA
December 23
Scott M. Larabee, Coordinator
(714) 444-4566

The Saturday Gathering — **TYPE I and II**
Costa Mesa Women's Club
Costa Mesa, CA
December 30
Scott M. Larabee, Coordinator
(714) 444-4566

Winter Break Magic Tournament — **TYPE I**
Active Club Rec. Bldg.
Port Orchard, WA
December 30
Ralph Utrup, Coordinator
(360) 871-5767